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To Answer Emily

Jane Hoyme

In a small town you can walk or pedal out into the country until cement roads turn into dirt ones flanked by field after field of wild oats or tall grass. The noise of twelve-noon traffic on Demers and Fourth is far away now; only the wind is heard as it runs dust eddies down the road, or whistles through the wheat. For the first or hundredth time, you can think back on all the people or places familiar to you since childhood. You can consider a tulip, now or later; they've bloomed before—they'll bloom again.

Was it that first tulip I crouched beside our house to see, that fixed it in my mind that something has to be as good inside as it is on the outside? I had held the stem and looked at the streaks of blue, black, and ivory curving up the inside of the petals that folded closely around the soot-black stamens. The ivory of the waxy petals seemed to let light into the egg-shaped flower, and when I touched the stamens, specks of black sprinkled onto the petals. The intensity of the colors and the light through the ivory streaks showed me an inside maybe even more important than an outside.

I remembered liking to watch people with real skill do work with their hands, such as making a garden or a pie. Often I had seen the outline of my grandmother against the early morning sun.

The black coat she wore hung open as she bent over to weed in her backyard garden. How we savored the asparagus, carrots, and cucumbers she brought in to us — and strawberries that she gathered before the birds did! And the pies she made! In no time at all she could roll out the thinnest crust, fold it in half, and with a knife design "crow's feet" on it. She'd lift the crust ever so carefully to cover the rose and olive-green chunks of rhubarb. The cream she rubbed on top made hers the most glazed pies of any I've seen. She quietly informed in me a pride for real skill.

People of a small town are like performers in a chamber music group in that the individuals had better be top-notch—incompetence is hard to hide. The men and women who live active lives really stand out, as Dwight Sherwood does in our town. He has been high school choir director for thirty years, and he's just the kind administrators don't know how to take; he seldom has made it to a faculty meeting, and rather than go to Teachers' Conventions, he fishes for walleyes and northerns on the Canadian Lake of the Woods! But he respects his students and is certain that with his help and a great deal of discipline and drill we will be able to sing hard music. We believe him. So together, we give ourselves up to singing *St. Cecilia's Mass, The Last Words of David,* or *The Ballad of Brotherhood.* For years his choruses have been able to handle the thrill of concert nights—and in one glance from Mr. Sherwood they could tell if everything had come off all right. For lighter music, people came from as far as Minneapolis to see our operettas, and the auditorium would be sold out days ahead. We couldn't *wait* to hear how a boy, that no one had noticed until Sherwood chose him as Arthur, would sing his part in *Camelot.* The Marian the Librarian scenery—how had the best art student painted that for *The Music Man?* And would the sailor boys in *South Pacific* really make their entrance by running down the aisles, tossing their white caps, and singing "Bloody Mary"?

Maybe, in watching my grandmother make pies, and Dwight Sherwood direct our chorus, I was only seeing again the inside of a tulip. To answer Emily, who, in Thornton Wilder's *Our Town,* asks, "Do any human beings ever realize life while they live it?"— no, too often they don't. But it seems to me they have a chance of realizing life in a quiet, slow-moving town, where people take pride in knowing how to raise bright red and orange zinnias, or well-behaved children.

Hindu Argument

You can imagine the great spirit sweeping
effortlessly through the minds of his children,
collecting all their thoughts in a moment —
listening, sorting — sifting through his
fingers as with a superhuman joy
the aspirations, feelings of each one.
You can imagine him hearing and, as it were, condemning
those who do not believe in him to the death
in which they do believe — of cold and everlasting darkness —
and jubilantly lifting those who have accepted
him into the everlasting sunlight of his joy.
You can see what his heaven would be like —
to become a part of him, that warm and eternal
wave that sweeps through living things —
and blaze to life again upon the wheel of darkness.

PAUL BAKER NEWMAN

Eleusis

The icy snow crust will not stay,
Its cold and perfect beauty was not meant to last.
While glittering in the morning,
Sparkling with the dancing lights of a sun not yet full warm,
It mantles with pristine perfection the solid form below.
Untouched serenely white, the purist's dream soon will flow away.

When sun holds earth in strong embrace and makes the spring-time
rains to fall,
The ivory lace will shred, reveal red soil below.
It has not beauty, yet will not dissipate,
Not in streaming sunlight, nor in violent storm,
In all the vicissitudes of being, the earth will not cease to be.
For strong she is, yet bringing forth the tender green of life
Made fertile by the rains.
The rains, both violent and most gentle,
The rains take the earth by storm, beating her to
defiant submission —
The springtime mist when earth and rain merge pale and tender.

Then with the heat of summer sun and with the strength within her.
The green things the earth conceived
Push rudely from her belly and her loins,
Stand tall to the sun, nourished by her mother-blood
Moving in their veins,
Making them hers and hers alone, forever,
Reach to the sun, but remain bound to earth
And bring forth for her seeds of yet another season.

Then sun smiles on her no more.
He is withdrawn to pale solitude
And has taken his presence from her.
The rains of his sky are cold and bitter
With the knowledge of omnipotent death,
And earth no longer joyfully mingles herself with them,
Drawing them to the inside of her.
But autumn rains trickle the frozen, shriveled form of
passive earth.
Now are the fruits of her nature fallen away from her.
Earth is a barren thing, stripped to naked ugliness —
Stripped, she has lost her strong grace
And the beauty of her son-oaks and willow-daughters;
Yet drifting down to death
One small brown leaf —
Faint trace of summer sun.

FRANCES R. A. PATERSON

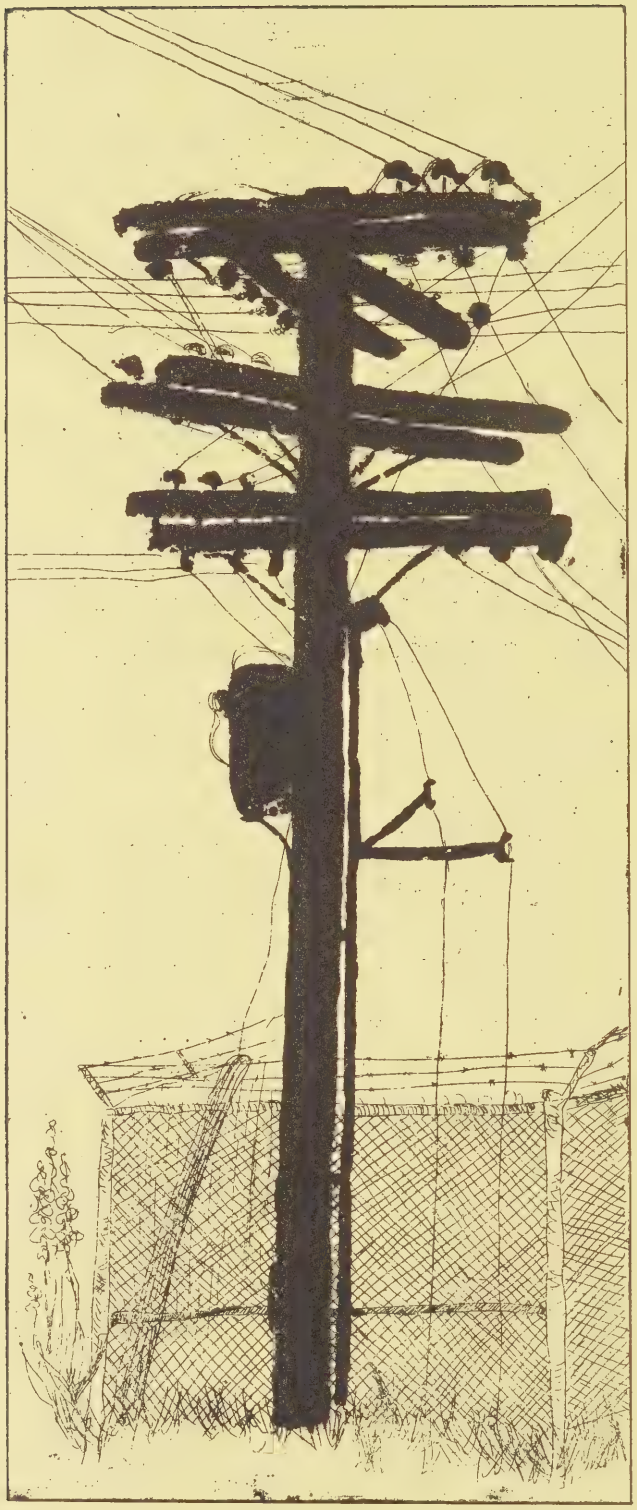
Early Aspirations

Beware what you tell young children,
For tomorrow they'll say to you
What you said to them:
With his glee for game
Undiminished as yet
Jeff dashed up the stairs
For lunch, and announced
To himself, "I beat!"

But, if you've seen a boy,
Fifteen and idle,
Who shrinks to admit,
"Naw—I can't read much,
Just slow, you know"—
Realize his gray
Solemn faltering
Began years ago.

And I read for a fact
Our children, untutored,
Feared Russians grew trees
To hide people by—
Not for shade, nor fancy.
The earth will resound in tremors
Of fear, unless you
Beware what you tell young children.

JANE HOYME



Are We People?

In the center of the circle
Into which the crowd refused to step
Lay a Man
Dying in a pool of blood
On the wet, black asphalt.
No one made a sound.
The man looked out, his face
Tense with fear,
And when he cried for help
No one moved.
The bodies of the people
Surrounded him like bars of steel.
From the pits of their eyes came cold, hard shafts
Which pressed him down toward Hell.
Their mouths gaped, deep wells of night,
And as he lay in wretched dread,
Their faces, chiselled granite, stared
Like children's at a zoo.

ELIZABETH ANN KERR

The Retort

At first,
the retort,
thoughtlessly uttered,
had the impact
of a pebble
rolling down an incline
lightly touching past
conversations and remembrances.
Then,
the retort,
unexpectedly received,
gained the momentum
of a rock
crashing down a mountainside
destroying the understanding
which stood in its way.
Later,
the retort,
thoroughly comprehended,
smashed at the bottom
of the mind
leaving a gap
in an avalanche
of concealed emotion.

FRANCES MATHAY

No Question of Time

How can I continue laughing,
Stifled by this dust?
I am convinced that it is
A deepening uncertainty,
And you mock me,
Saying it's only temporary.

A temporary dust
Composed of ground up bug wings
And fallout; and you,
Too ecstatic to reach out and touch
Even one spoke of the wheel
In which we turn,
Entangling ourselves more
As time laps up the road beneath us
Like a hungry dog eating asphalt burgers.

How shall I continue laughing;
Nights are few,
More or less enveloped by
The clarity of days. And light discloses
A deepening uncertainty,
Making things grow.

All that grows
Is the number of faces passing by
Looking too fleshy, smelling dusty —
Yours among them, laughing at me
Saying it's only temporary.
And I continue laughing.

SUE RUPPRECHT

Why is a Dandelion?

Nancy Knoohuizen

They had been quarreling again—that was the first thing I remembered that morning. It had gone on far into the night. I had wakened again and again to hear the snarl of voices rising and falling in the next room. It had frightened me even though it was nothing new. And I'd had that dream—the dream that came every time they quarreled—when I would be running and running from something, but couldn't possibly get away.

Rolling over on the narrow bed, I looked at the pattern of sunshine on the floor. I could tell by its brightness that it wasn't early. So Mama would be at work, but Daddy should be home. Yet the house was quiet, a still, unnatural quiet. I got up and dressed hurriedly.

There was no one in the house. And it was in bad shape—dishes from last night piled in the sink, papers littered all around, one of the chairs knocked over. There was a cockroach crawling on a piece of meat sitting in a cracked bowl, fat congealed around it. I brushed him off and put a plate over the dish; we couldn't afford to waste anything. Then I went outside. Once there, I stopped with a shock.

It was an incredible day—the kind that you don't see often. The kind that really shouldn't happen at all; such days are too lovely. The air seemed to me like a big cold glass of strawberry soda. It was totally clean and rosy. The sun came through warm but not heavy between your shoulder blades as in summer. Everything looked as if it had been cut out separately, the edges clear and knifelike.

But that air didn't improve our house. Next to the beauty of the day it looked unbelievably shabby. The broken post on the corner of the porch wasn't hidden by the fern that covered it in summer. The peeling green paint showed the worn gray boards underneath; the dirty windows sneered at the brilliant air. The litter in the tiny side yard which we shared with the next house covered what little

grass grew there. The next house was just like ours and every other one on our street.

I decided to spend the day down by the river. That was my favorite spot in our town. Daddy had been the first to show it to me. We had gone there together lots of times, when we'd sit on the slope of grass right above the bank and just watch the motorboats and the barges on the river and talk.

Daddy would point out that the world was where someone really learned, not in schoolrooms. He'd say that all that was needed to accomplish anything was a dream strong enough to take on life of its own. And his proof was his own success — success though he hadn't even finished grammar school.

We lived in a little white house, then, with blue shutters on the front window. Daddy was crazy about that house, and he spent all his time at home from work repairing something or trying to make some flowers grow by the back porch. He always said that the white house was just the first step. Before long, we'd be living in one of those big brick houses three stories high with columns in front. "Just as soon as these new possibilities pan out," he'd say, "we'll be on our way up."

He used to talk a lot about possibilities. They sounded so close, as though they were waiting right around the corner for him to come and get them. But somehow they just never came close enough.

My father loved to talk. And Mama and I loved to listen to him. He used to straddle a chair in the kitchen at night and talk to us while we did the dishes, which didn't seem like a chore with Daddy sitting there. Almost always he'd tell us about his dream. It was all about how things would be someday, when we'd live somewhere else. He'd tell us how we'd have cars and everything; I'd have a pony and a ruffly canopied bed. Then he would wink at me and say that Mama would be the most beautiful lady in town when he bought her what he wanted for her. And she would blush and laugh—she really was pretty when she laughed! Later she'd scold him and tell him to climb out of his clouds and get to work, but she'd smile when she said it.

I was thinking about all of this while I sat by the river that day. I remember that I found a clump of late dandelions down there and picked some to take to Daddy. He loved those gold flowers. He'd told me one time that they were the most beautiful flowers in the world because they didn't cost anything. They just grew anywhere.

My father was such a wonderful man. I used to think he was ten feet tall. He walked proudly, his head high and his shoulders

straight. And he grinned—he grinned at the whole world. When I was with him, even our street seemed different. He had the gift of greeting the simple process of existence with wonder. I didn't see the shoddy buildings or the laundry hanging out on front porches. I saw only the sky and heard the pigeons calling over the sound of the traffic.

Those were happy days, the ones that came before the quarrels. The quarrels started after Daddy got laid off work the first time. He kept insisting that it was only temporary, that something even better would come up next week. But it didn't—not that week, or the next. Then Mama stopped smiling.

I can still remember the first time they had a quarrel. Daddy was sitting on the porch, and Mama had been out shopping. She walked up to the house, put down her paper sack carefully and turned around to face Daddy. She told him that she'd gotten a job in a grocery store. His face looked stunned for a minute, as though she'd slapped him; then he got mad.

I was so scared—I'd never heard their voices so shrill and ugly before! And afterwards I never really got used to the tones of anger; I wanted to run away from them. Daddy always ended by stamping out of the house. Then Mama would cry.

Things only got worse from that time on. Daddy finally got another job, but he lost that too after a while. Gradually the periods of no work got longer and longer. A change began to come over him then; he stopped laughing and he didn't work around the house anymore. He'd just sit on the porch, his hands idle. Mama started working later hours. She'd come home bone-tired, and her face would be tight and drawn. One night when she'd come home later than usual, she had walked into the house slowly and sat down in a chair. I realized for the first time that there were two deep creases in her forehead, that her skin was sort of pulled in over her cheekbones, and her eyes were dark hollows. Daddy had been out for a walk, and he came in through the back door. Mama didn't hear him.

He stopped short in the doorway and looked at her, his greeting fading away unspoken. He watched her for a long time, his face and body very still. I couldn't figure out what he seemed like—he looked so strange. The only thing I could think of was the new boy on our street who had bragged so hard about how fast he could run and then got beat by runty little Joey Michelle. Daddy's face looked the same; only the boy had cried and Daddy didn't. Then he turned slowly and walked out of the room.

Suddenly it was a whole year since my father had lost his last job. I had worn all my dresses until they were way up over my knees, but Mama said we'd just have to make do. Mama and Daddy had stopped talking and laughing altogether by then. He just sat on the porch and stared out at the street. And he didn't hold his shoulders so straight as he used to.

Then we had to leave our white house. It was an awful day. Mama told me the night before that we were moving to a smaller house; that we couldn't afford this one any more. There was a bad quarrel about it. Daddy tried so hard to keep that house. How it must have hurt him to lose it! It was the last symbol of his dream — his someday.

So we moved. Daddy never found another job and Mama worked more and more. She was tired and sick most of the time; I used to try to help with the housework, but I don't think I helped her much.

And the quarrels went on, getting worse and more violent. Daddy would sit in the house for days, with idleness eating away at him. Then Mama'd nag him about something and he would explode in rage and despair. But the quarrel the night before that Saturday was the worst I remembered so far, with a new note of hopelessness in it.

I didn't leave the river until dusk was falling. I hadn't wanted to lose one instant of that beautiful day. As the sun was setting, I started home, carrying the flowers for Daddy.

But, walking up to the house, I heard their voices again—my father's loud, outraged; my mother's tense and flat. I walked around to the back and crept into the kitchen so they couldn't see me. Daddy kept yelling something like Mama couldn't do that, she had no call to do that to him. Mama answered slow and tired that she couldn't help it; she had tried but she was just too worn out to take it any longer. I couldn't understand what all they were saying.

Then Daddy stopped yelling and just Mama was talking. I inched over so I could see them through the doorway. Mama was still dressed from work but she had our battered suitcase sitting beside her, and her things were cleared off the dresser. Daddy just sat there, humped over, and stared at the floor. Mama was saying that she was sorry, but she just couldn't take it anymore and this was how it would have to be.

She stood up then and faced him: "I'll be back for Jean Ellen tomorrow. I told my sister I'd be there tonight." Her voice sounded real funny, not as if it belonged to her at all, but went on by itself.

But there were two bluish-white spots at the corners of her mouth she was holding tight and still. She bent over and picked up the bag. Then Daddy turned his head toward her, his eyes lost. He looked up, begging, "Please, Julie, try again! Things will get better. Those possibilities . . . I can find something . . . and someday—." His voice broke off, but that word hung there for a long time.

Mama's face worked for a minute and her feet shifted as if she were going to walk over to him. But she stopped, shook her shoulders a little straighter, turned, and went out to the street. I could hear her heels clicking on down the street until they faded off. Daddy sat there staring at the floor.

I was frightened—I didn't know what to do. I sat there pinched into a corner of the kitchen for a long time, numb and sick inside. But I must have been crying because somehow Daddy knew I was there and called to me. "Jean Ellen? . . . Ellen?" I got up and walked carefully into the next room. Daddy didn't look up at me.

"Daddy. Here I am, Daddy . . ." He glanced at me and said mechanically, "You're home late, Jean Ellen, you should be . . ." He broke off short. "What do you have in your hand?"

I looked down. There were those gold flowers, wilted now, crushed tight. I held them out: "I picked them for you; they're your favorites!"

He reached out for them and looked at them for a moment, then he dropped them on the floor, crushing them with his heel. His face looked awful. His lips twisted, and he looked mad, tired, and lost altogether. He grabbed me by the shoulders and shook me hard, shouting: "Listen to me, Jean Ellen! These are not flowers. Hear? They're dandelions, and dandelions are weeds. *Weeds,* do you hear? Ugly, useless things that don't belong anywhere!" His voice rose to a shout, then cut off. Something told me not to look at him, so I kept very still. But I heard a strange sound, like a little gasp. So I looked up.

He was crying. The tears slowly trickled down his cheeks and dripped off his chin. But he didn't make a sound. Suddenly I was more frightened than ever. I tore loose from his grasp and ran out the door and down the street as fast as I could. I was having that dream again, only now I was in it. And I didn't know where I was running.

Quiet Journey

The sun stood high on the morning grass
Shining high into the trees
Shining high above the roofs of time
And below, that singular white cat
Moved out beyond the black asphalt
To the pine and oak lawn.
My eyes followed him vastly roaming
Among the minutes; followed him
As the minutes became a pine here
An oak there till a forest had grown
Around me. As the cat was lost somewhere
In that wide embrace of time, so
Was I.

DENNY HUBBARD

Signet 20

Ah - OOO!

Dr. Edmund T. Weiant
Senior Recognition Day
September 23, 1966

> Strengthen ye the weak hands and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not; behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence, he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert, And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes.
>
> Isaiah 35: 3-7

Something serious and very exciting is quietly happening in Russia these days, and you should know what it is. It's the mending of time and the earth. The question most often put to me since my return from Moscow has been this one: "You were even there in 1961. How has life changed in five years?"

It's a good question, and one I answer this way: Life is easier and there has been steady improvement in material living standards. Even while things are not up to snuff, there is real hope that some way will be found to improve on conditions. Any casual observer will note the obvious and outward changes, but how are these new conditions of life affecting the less visible, the intangible aspects of Soviet life? *Here* is the real question. Let's open it up and see what's inside.

An unknown writer composed these lines in the mid 1950's, and his words sketch in the general setting for what I want to consider with you:

> On that morning, in the mausoleum, Stalin was buried,
> And the evening was ordinary—crystal and clear.
> I walked quietly, tranquilly,
> Alone with Moscow
> And here is what I thought, verily,
> Like a clever fellow:
> The epoch of spectacles has ended,
> The epoch of bread has arrived
> A smoking break has been declared
> For those who have been storming the heavens.[1]

A smoking break—time. Time to think. Ahead and back. Bread is to eat. The recent past is big, dark and troubled. Nearly every Soviet citizen thinks about those days in his own way, profoundly or superficially. But whoever looks back beyond 1953 will see the massive pedestal that once bore the monumental figure of Stalin. He dominated the age. Questions about the past cannot but touch this person. Russians will take one of three attitudes towards the man and his times—or even a combination of all.

One view is that the past is too horrible to contemplate. When Stalin's embalmed remains were carried from the Mausoleum and buried out back under a granite slab near the Kremlin Wall, the poet Yevtushenko was allowed to publish in Pravda his poem, *Stalin Heirs,* in which these lines occur:

> Thin wisps of smoke curled over the coffin.
> And the breath seeped through the chinks
> As they bore him out the mausoleum doors.
> Slowly the coffin floated, grazing the fixed bayonets.
> He was silent—he too! Mute and dead.
>
> Grimly clenching his embalmed fists,
> Just pretending to be dead,
> he watched from inside.
> He was scheming.
> Had merely dozed off.
> And I, appealing to our government, petition them
> to double
> and treble
> the Sentries guarding this slab,
> And prevent Stalin from ever rising again.[2]

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[1]From "Poems from the Underground" in *Problems of Communism* (Washington, D. C.), May-June 1961.

[2]George Reavey, translation from *Khrushchev and the Arts,* by Priscilla Johnson M.I.T. Press, 1965.

Is he really—Dead? A terrible warning. The past is almost too terrifying to remember. Better bury it and keep it buried and dead and start all over fit and fresh from some kind of new beginning. Khrushchev and his successors are attempting this with some success. It is of more than passing interest that Yevtushenko (of all the young poets today) seems least interested in facing up to what *has* been.

Others, on looking back will say that things were indeed better under Stalin. I've been told that many such people secretly carry with them tiny icon-like portraits of Stalin. A myth in his own time, he has become (let's hope for only a very few) a Holy Saint. Who are these quiet people who apparently believe but are reluctant to bear witness too openly? Who can say? What kind of people they might be can fairly easily be understood. Soviet life—economic, artistic, cultural and political—has become more and more complex and is no longer readily comprehended at one glance from the Kremlin Wall. The Tsars and the old Bolsheviks used to run their domains in the style of landowners running their estates. Authority, obedience, service. Life is not that simple anymore. Ironically, it is the Communists' successful use of raw political power that has brought into being this more complicated industrial society which in turn can no longer be operated in the old manner. Simple tyranny is both inefficient and morally unacceptable. So—as time goes by, increasing the distance from the cold horror of the 1930's, there are bound to be some people who become nostalgic for the good old days when, as the saying goes, the coffin was used to straighten people out.

A third response to questions about the past neither ignores nor glorifies Stalin, but seeks among the ghosts of those times the ones who still hold the lost thread's broken end—and there to tie the important knot, mending time.

By and large this is the response of a small but very influential group, the literary intelligentsia. All the literary generations—fathers, sons, grandfathers are represented in the effort to splice the broken lines of communication from the past to this moment and beyond. What will they hear? What will they learn?

A respected literary critic whom I had the privilege of meeting this summer spoke of the prose writers who analyze, of the dramatists who illustrate the truth and of the poets who begin it all by bringing up just the right word which states the truth. The July, 1966 issue of *The Atlantic* carries an interview with Andrei Voznesensky, who says:

> "In Russia, the national art is poetry—just as in France the national art is painting. Therefore, the place of the poet is somewhat different in Russia than in other coun-

tries. Actually, poets in Russia have always had a special place, from Pushkin through Blok and Pasternak: they were not only poets, but prophets as well. And therefore our poets bear a great responsibility. I'm happy I was born in that country."

It is far from easy to break the silence with just the right word. Under Stalin no one spoke his heart. No one called out to the other. Society was atomized. Each his neighbor's dictator. The word withered on the lip. The ear strained at the silence and caught only pronouncements made of haggard former-words, grown weary in the never-ending service to propaganda. The poet Osip Mandelshtam is said to have composed these lines on Stalin and the times. He read them to his private circle of friends and survived neither the times nor his friends.

We live unconscious of the country beneath us,
Our talk cannot be heard ten paces away,
And whenever there is enough for half a conversation,
The Kremlin mountaineer is mentioned.
His thick fingers are fat like worms,
His words hit hard like sash weights,
His cockroach's huge moustaches laugh,
And the tops of his boots shine brightly.[3]

Break the silence if you can. Five years ago an illegal student newspaper, *Phoenix,* put out in mimeograph, carried this motto on its cover:

Why are you twisting your lips so?
What word is it you are trying to speak?[4]

Had these young students heard of Mandelshtam? Perhaps. Had they read his poetry? Not likely at all. But some day they will. And what will happen then? When the past opens out?

It's sad to behold the destruction of the past, and with it, sense of time. So depressing to watch the attempts to paper over crimes committed in the name of a great cause. Consider history books that piously hide or invent facts. Consider the dreary dictionaries that are no more than asylums for pathetically deranged or catatonic words. They say that murder will out. I must believe in this. I think it will happen in Russia, possibly for the reason that there are enough people who *want* to remember the past and who want to rediscover its dimensions and build on it.

Anna Akhmatova, who died at age seventy-six last spring, can speak with authority of those years. In the late thirties she stood in

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[3]E. Brown, *The Prose of Osip Mandelshtam* (Princeton University Press, 1965).
[4]From *Gvani* (Frankfurt/Main, 1962).

line outside the NKVD building in Leningrad day after day waiting for word of her son who had been arrested. A woman turned and asked "Can you describe . . . This?" "I can," she answered. And she did, in a collection of poems not yet published in the Soviet Union. *Requiem* begins with these words as I have translated them:

No, not under a foreign sky
Nor beneath the cover of alien wings—
I was with my people then,
Where my people—unfortunately—were.

Akhmatova sees herself in another part of *Requiem:*

Still and silent flows the Don.
Yellow moon looks in.
With cap aslant the moon comes in.
What shadow does he see?

Woman sick—and all alone,
"Woman. What's been done?"
They've killed my man. They have my son—
Oh pray, do pray for me.[5]

She looked back; faced the dreadful past. Pasternak, another strong link to the past, wrote these lines for Anna Akhmatova: I give you only excerpts:

You bend to your sewing until you weep
sunrise and sunset redden your swollen eyes.
That's how I see your face and expression.
This, not the pillar of salt, the Lot's wife you pinned down
in rhyme five years ago to show up our fear,
limping forward in blinders, afraid of looking back.

How early your first dogged, unremitting idiom
Hardened—no unassembled crumbs!
In all our affairs, your lines throb
With high charge of our passing world.
Each wire is a conductor.[6]

From the ruins of these burned out years come the sounds of strangled voices, interrupted lines of thought, and the sight of names and faces either half-forgot or never known. The shades call out to today's searchers for the word. Slowly, magically, life begins to reassert her continuing influence over disruptive events, begins to mend the torn earth. That the appetite for truth is never completely lost, though generations may perish or go mad is something magnificent. Oy! Man! What a creature!

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[5]Anna Akhmatova, Tom. 1, Illa, Paris.
[6]Translation by R. Lowell in "Seven Poems," *The Atlantic* (September, 1961).

The search for meaning and continuity goes on. This is what you must watch! A small volume of poetry by the fifty-eight year old "poet's poet,"Arsenniy Tarkovsky, was published in 20,000 copies and sold out in one morning this summer. The collection is entitled *Zemle-Zemnoye*—to the earth what is the earth's—the Russian way of saying "render unto Caesar what is Caesar's." Here is my translation of the first poem of the book—significantly entitled "Slovar" —Dictionary:

I am but a smaller twig of the Russian tree,
Of its flesh and to my leaves
There come the moist steely sinews,
Fibrous, of blood and bone,
Direct extensions of the roots.

There's a mighty yearning for the heights,
And so I am immortal, as long
As there flows in my veins the icy moisture
Of subterranean springs, my pain and boon—
All the R's and L's of the sacred language.[7]

I was called to life by the blood of all births,
Of all deaths. I lived in the times
When the nameless genius of men
Animated the dumb flesh of things and appearances
Giving them names.

His dictionary is opened up full page
From the clouds to the depths of the earth.
—Teach the blue titmouse intelligible speech
And let fall—a single leaf into the well,
Golden, green, scarlet, rust . . .[8]

The history of Russian literature, wrote Alexander Herzen a century ago, is compiled from prisoner lists and martyrdoms. Tarkovsky had what is called euphemistically a Hard Life, that is, years in Siberia. I had the pleasure of hearing Joseph Brodsky recite several new verses at his first, but unannounced, public appearance after two years in the north. He had been exiled for parasitism. He calls Tarkovsky the "only real poet who is now being published . . . After Pasternak, he is the best we have."

Here is part of Tarkovsky's poem *Life, My little one.* The ide, in the poem, is a kind of fish. In this poem, Dostoyevsky is present —still another spirit from the past, resurrected.

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[7]These letters are considered "unpoetic," but this poem in Russian is shot through with R and L, which are also initials for the words "speech" and "leaf."
[8]Tarkovsky, A., *Zemle-Zemnoye* (Moscow, 1966).

I love life and I'm afraid to die.
You should see how I writhe against the current
And arch like an ide in the fisherman's hands
As I transform myself into words.
But I am neither fisherman nor fish;
I'm one of those inhabitants of corners.
I resemble Raskolnikov in looks.
I clasp my grievance like a violin.[9]
—"Transform myself into words—"
—"The Russian tree—"
—"Each wire a conductor"
—"I was with my people then—"
—"Why are you twisting your lips so?"

Where do *we* figure in all this? I really don't know. It's for each of us to find out—that life only begins outside and beyond the sweet security of here and now. Outside the fortress! Frightening

it well might be to look back or ahead at some point along the way, difficult to mend broken time and the torn earth. In this each of us may at the same time be both victim and offender. Sometimes it is almost impossible to pronounce the right mending word. We're all in this together. We don't have to be *all alone.*

Let's just say that there live among us today some people in Russia who are undertaking this difficult job—so important to them and to us. We could all learn a thing or two from them—the true

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[9]Translated by R. Blum in *The New Yorker* (September 11, 1965).

dimensions of life and freedom. These Russians reach back pretty far in mending time and the earth. Even to the most elemental things: To sound, to color, to trees that grow, to the water that makes green the grass where the dragons used to rest, to the very dictionary of creation with the names that mean, to the word that cries out to be spoken. What could it be? Who can say? Who will say it?

Maybe it's only the sound long heard in Russian forests at mushrooming time. When you're all alone in the woods and it's late, and you've got to find your friends you call out

Ah OOOO!

Then—you hear

Ah OOOO!

I found this happy sound in print in a recent edition of Viktor Bokov's poetry. A forester and his little daughter come upon a tiny sapling. He leans down to it and asks:

Well, how are you taking root?
So what is it you want to become?
The leaves rustle in answer:
I will grow
I will grow up.
It can't be any other way.
Beyond the woods a cathedral stands,
Only its golden dome in view,
And the twentieth century one day
Will call out to the twelfth: Ahhh OOOO![10]

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[10]V. Bokov: *Stikhi* (Moscow, 1965).

Solamente A Veces Renacimiento

As if I were some blue butterfly
kicking around on last month's flowers,
I used to cry
a little
for the petals brown, slithery sake
thinking how nice to be green
(all photosynthesizing loveliness.)
But now they've all stopped breathing
(And all stopped making love.)

This was just the other day
actually, not more than afternoon,
when I began to notice how flowers die.

(And then I picked off the sickly stems
and let them float down the gutter
along with rainbows of gasoline
and, no doubt, spittle
from a hundred or more of last month's mouths.)

ELIZABETH EARLE

From *Phaedo*

You laugh
Till your self
Bursts out of your laugh-belly
Singing

A sad song.
No more laugh
Is left.

You cry
Till your self
Bursts out of your wet heart
Sighing

A tired sigh.
No more cry
Is left.

SUE RUPPRECHT

Felodese

Now
the
screaming
deafening
pitch
of the
cat-gut
stretched
ever so
tautly
reaches
higher and
higher.
Faster . . .
Faster . . .
Roaring
Whirling
Spinning
(Hands
placed
over the
ears
don't even
stop it.)
It penetrates
deeper.
A desperate
trembling
sob
breaks forth.
A scream
finds
its way
through the teeth.

It won't
Stop
It won't
Stop!

suddenly

Tautness
breaks.
All
is let loose.
All
escapes.
Silence
now has
come
covering,
hiding.
The only sound
now
of heavy panting.
A soft,
soft rain
begins
to fall,
befriending
the harsher
rain on
your face.
Desperate
Hopeless
Reaching
Failing
O, Buen Senor,
Está terminado.
Está terminado.

RHETA LANEHART

Becoming One

Sue Rupprecht

Betsy heard the muffled thud as John tossed his books on the living room couch. He came is so quietly—he must have thought she was asleep. Not today. She glanced at the clock—it said six-fifteen. He was later than usual. She touched her hair—it was tousled, but after two years what difference did a few bird-wisps make? Tolerating such imperfections made John more interested in her dressing up—the great metamorphosis, he called it.

"Hi," she said, punctuating the rhythm of her steps on the linoleum in a half questioning, half exclamatory tone. "It's after six—where'd you go?"

He had his back to her but turned and offered his hello-after-eight-hours grin. "Stopped off downtown and got the groceries; they're still in the car. Couldn't get whipping cream at Kroger's, and the dairy was closed. That okay?"

"Oh, there's something out there in a cabinet corner—concoctions are better anyway!" She tossed her head toward the kitchen.

"What time are they coming?" He picked up his books and headed toward the den—the mini-room, they called it. It was really too small for a bed, so he had his desk in it.

She followed him halfway across the room and leaned up against

the back of an armchair. "Everyone's coming at eight except Tom and Paula—you know how people straggle in, though, especially if they've had cocktails before dinner."

"What's for dinner for *us?*" He strained his voice—basses don't usually make good tenors, and his attempt to speak more loudly from the den sounded screechy. He probably thought she was in the kitchen.

"What do we usually eat before the gang comes? Three guesses and the first two don't count." She didn't raise her voice at all.

"Well—fix me three at least." He came back into the living room. "I got hot dog buns. Saw this morning we were out. I must be telepathic—I didn't think we'd be lucky enough to have them for supper tonight!"

"What's this?" She moved over and picked up a record from the stereo. *Prelude, Chorale and Fugue,* she read, mispronouncing prelude.

"That's what Bob and I were talking about last Friday. I listened to them once at the library. He's got them. Thought I'd splurge for the weekend."

"Well—put it on—who's Franck, anyhow? I missed out on that one. Must've been talking to Carolyn then." She moved stocking-footed to the kitchen and got a pot from over the stove. It banged on the burner. He hadn't answered, so the noise didn't matter.

Supper was silent—she was preoccupied with her whipping creamless concoction and he was busy adjusting his head between his shoulders in time to the music. Five of the quietest hot dogs ever consumed.

When she started to pick up the dishes, his stupor faded as he walked toward the phone.

"Who are you calling?" was asked in tune to gurgling water.

"Mrs. Post. Don't you think we ought to check on Carrie? I would've stopped by, but I was late enough as it is—the mad pursuit of whipping cream, you know."

"More like the mad pursuit of Franck, you know," she mocked, but smiled at him.

He sighed internally, envisioning hot dogs, a clean apartment, Carrie . . . more important than "you-know-Franck." She should've finished high school. Nope, don't even think that—"all things will come to pass" or whatever it is; "patience is a virtue."

"I called at five and everything was O.K.. She'd slept four hours." She interrupted his thought. He felt guilty—as if she knew what he was thinking.

"No time anyway—it's ten till eight. Go check the ashtrays. I've

got to comb my hair." She folded the dish towel and pushed the rack back under the sink. He moved into the living room in front of her. She picked up her shoes and swished her nylons-on-carpet feet into the bedroom.

The doorbell made primping short. Bill and Kathy came first—obviously no cocktails before dinner—they were early. Betsy moved toward them and took Kathy's coat from Bill.

"We're early," Kathy apologized. "We went by Mother's, but they were out, and who's got gas money to ride around the block?" Her humor eased them into another evening. They sank into chairs, talking, rising to greet the other couples. Bob and Carolyn were among the last to come. Had Bob been canine, his ears would have perked up when he came in the door. He immediately recognized the Franck. Betsy was standing by him and he smiled at her.

"Old man got them, huh?" he drawled in his Charlestonese.

Betsy grinned. For some reason, mental slides of Charleston flicked through her mind every time he spoke. She looked at the record player and then back at Bob. "Yes, John got them today—weekend splurge. I really like them!"

E Street N.W.

Tons of moving steel on ribboned asphalt
Rumble past each other and are driving,
Sliding, squeezing, dodging, charging through the
Traffic—each particular, uncaring being
With a private destination
And a private way of getting there.

ELIZABETH ANN KERR

The Patriots

Balloons of every color bob
Like happy clouds in summer air
Above the town's gazebo mobbed
With people, who know where from or why there.
Chatham tonight is at Yankee Doodle's best
Singing to its own band
Notes by which America is blest
And damned.

TILDA TODD

Why Couldn't I?

Elizabeth Ann Kerr

Have you ever felt as if you're in a room where the walls are closing in on you? Or, have you ever been asked . . . "Well, why don't you understand?"

Day after day would go by and the routine of classes seemed more and more monotonous. Finally the last bell signaled the end of another afternoon, but then, it was always the same.

"Why are you so tired?"

"Come on, snap out of it!"

"Hey—what's the matter with *you*?"

These pleasant comments usually came from my younger brother. I knew Mom had told Daddy how I'd been acting, but for some reason he never brought up the subject of my odd behavior. Maybe Daddy alone sensed my feelings. Oh—school was great, and being a junior couldn't have been better, but there were moments when I just didn't understand. For instance, one day it was warm and sunny and all the azaleas were in full bloom. The thick branches of lush green trees were motionless as they formed a dark green canopy over our street, making it seem cool and restrained. But this feeling that I didn't belong bothered me, and I wondered if anyone belongs, and if they do—to what?

However, my thoughts were quickly absorbed in "end of the year activities," and my mood was dissolved by parties, new clothes and getting ready to leave for our summer home. Traffic, hot pavements and dark city clothes soon were six-hundred miles away, and the days filled with the kind of lazy summer living of summers in Canada: golf, water-skiing, island parties and dances. I had no

real obligations. Every year our family went North, and the magic and thrill of being so fortunate for three months of the year was never lost on any of us.

Oh—everything was fine now—sure—until one afternoon when I really didn't have anything in particular to do, and anything I tried doing proved unsatisfactory. As the pages of the magazine on my lap fluttered in the breeze, I told myself to take a walk—a *long* walk. All the emotions that had been churning inside of me were still churning, and I knew that only I could figure them out. The worst problem I'd ever have, as I thought then, had to be faced and solved.

The little mountain road I chose to walk on was steep and dusty, alive with buzzing insects. But the woods through which it ran were deep and cool. On either side, the goldenrod and black-eyed Susans disappeared into the masses of fern which filled the forest. Pale sun-sprinkled fronds piled deep on the softness of the forest floor.

I turned from the road and followed the flowers far into the shade until I found a dark little stream running almost soundlessly over its bed of rocks and dead leaves. I sat down on one of the great grey boulders which, crusty with weathered lichen, broke through the fern assemblage, here and there; I watched the long, heavy moss of the stream bed trailing in the current as though trying to follow the clear water rushing over it.

After I left the rock my footsteps echoed, heavy and brutal, disturbing the quiet of the imperceptible life that in a summer forest is more a kind of silence than an actual sound. I realized that I did not belong there—just as I hadn't belonged on my street at home. I was the only incongruity in a world of green leaves and blending light. Was I really spoiling it by my presence? I stood still, trying to make myself part of it. And soon, a small brown bird approached me, hopping from tree to rock. He was a part, and fitted in. Why couldn't I? When I moved, he instantly flew away, chirping with fright. With every step I crushed a tiny plant or broke the silky tangle of threads in a spiderweb, destroying the very things which gave me pleasure. Why couldn't I be like the brown bird, moving harmlessly, my sounds the sounds of the forest, and natural to it?

Then I realized. The bird, living his life from day to day in the woods, and being one with them, could not understand or estimate his surroundings. The joy I felt from looking at the leaves and rocks could not be shared by him. Only because I was different could I appreciate what I saw. Yes, of course, and with this reali-

zation came my longed-for sense of belonging, not as a part of the woods themselves but as the beholder necessary to every work of creation.

At dinner, Dad asked where I'd been hiding all day.

"Oh, I was just doing things—hey—how come only *one* piece? You know roast beef is my favorite!"

"Sorry—here, *catch*!"

The thin rare piece of meat sailed through the air and landed dangling over the edge of my plate. Dad continued his carving, a delicate operation, and he gave the roast beef his full attention. Frail slivers of beef that made you eat twice as much as you should were the result. And when I passed my plate back for seconds Dad said, "Just 'doing things' brought back your appetite?"

"Well, maybe—I guess."

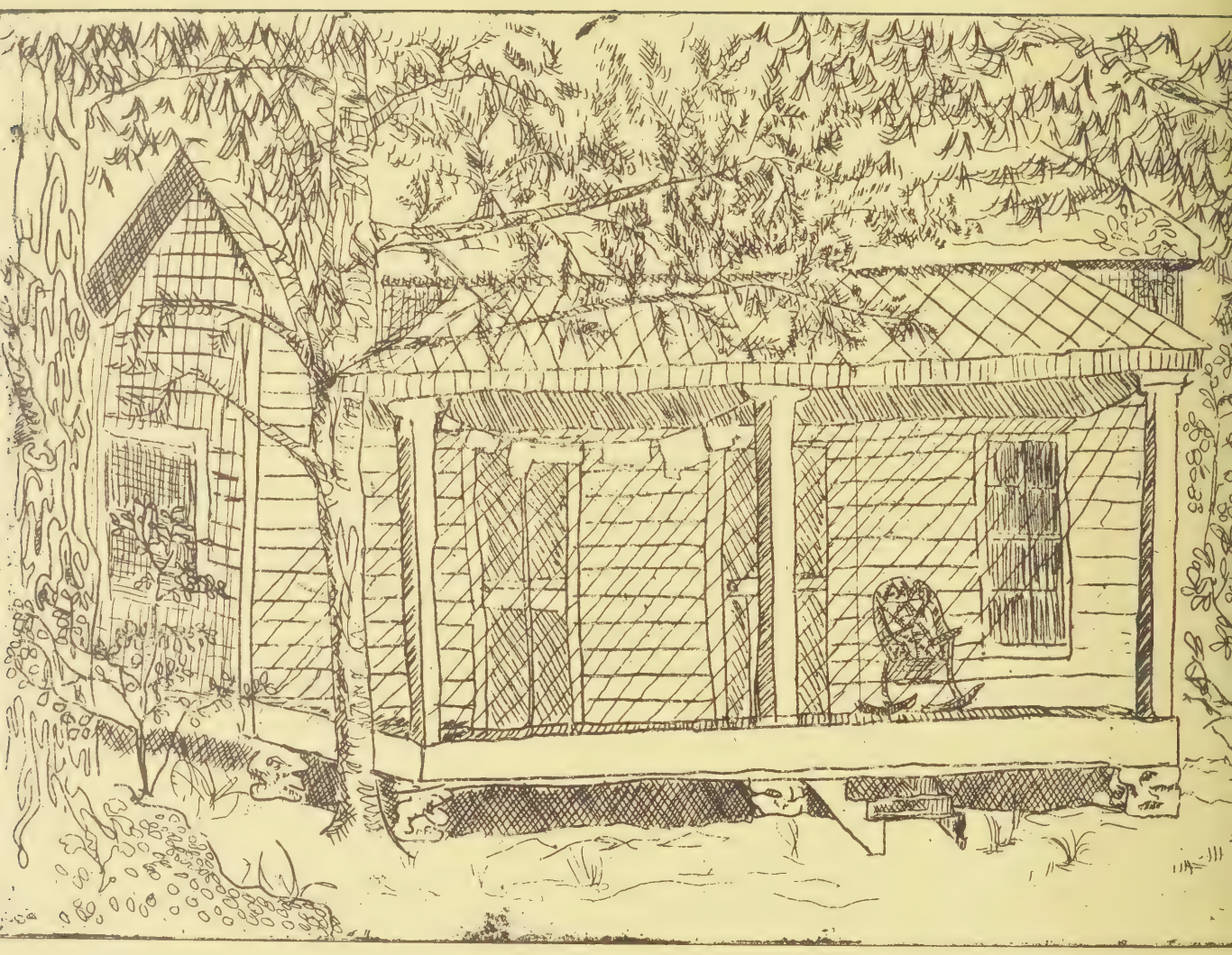
"I have a feeling you did some sorting out of ideas while you were hiding out this afternoon," he said. I nodded, and noticed the wink and half-smile that proved to me that I'd been right in thinking Dad had somehow known all the time how I'd have to find things out for myself.

Insight

You have not twenty-twenty vision, Kay,
Or surely you could equal staid with gay.
Do you fear the convex tear because
Society prevails, without a pause,
And reads the twenty-twenty line in life?

JANE HOYME

Maggie Smith



Bitterness

A long time he'll sit there by the creek
Hanging his head, dangling his feet
And keeping from me his stifled cries,
The tears well-crushed behind his eyes.
He knows today the fish won't bite—
Sam said just yesterday the moon weren't right.
But reasoning now ain't much use —
What he's caught, won't let loose.

FRANCES EUBANKS

Siguivere

Siggie ate the muffins and the butter, then broke
The dishes that scattered with a clatter,
And she ran!
Peek-a-boo Siggie, disobedient kitty
Cowering in the tassels of Rosie's best spread!
Come here, come here, you
Fluffy
hissing
clawsome
missy (Gotcha!)
Ah, is poor mangled Siggie scared?

FRANCES EUBANKS

Riddle

Near to the color of fire trucks;
It makes balls bounce
And knuckles bleed —
This thing that makes my yard
A fort.
What grows behind a wall?
What goes beyond a wall?
Some people can't see over!
Some people can't go out!

SUE RUPPRECHT

Zachary, Zachary

Zachary,
Zach get out of there.
Now you'll have to wash your hair.
"Shhh, I'm catchin' turtles."
Zachary, Zachary, can't you hear?
Look at the water, it's up to your ear!
"Don't you know when the sun gets hot
that turtles have got
a favorite spot, a favorite log
where they like to sleep . . . ?"
Zachary,
Zach, you're kneeling in weeds,
and muddy old slime, and hayfever seeds . . .
". . . and if I get close
while they're takin' a rest,
I can easily catch the one I like best."
Zachary, Zachary, get yourself out.
If Mother should see you—I know she will shout.
"I'll keep it till Friday, just a short
while,
and maybe by then I can teach
it to smile."

LESLIE DAVIS

Afterthoughts

Jeannie Simms

Our new house was the prettiest one on the street. I loved the trees that hid it from the other houses. Since we had always lived in an apartment, the excitement of waking up to a window full of rustling trees was more than I could bear. At eleven years old I was rather uncoordinated, but I did love the security of climbing big comfortable branches. With the first chirp of birds I'd rush outdoors to the trees, even before Mom called us for breakfast. One cool grey limb of a magnolia became my thinking place. Perched on that limb I could view the staircase at eye level. I'd watch feet, legs, and finally the familiar faces of my family march down for breakfast. I liked to think about the bird's nest on the limb above me, but never dared to disturb its tranquility. I'd just wait until the babies hatched before I looked to see what kind or how many they were. It was on the thinking limb that I first met Tom.

"HI," I said.

"Kiddo, you sure do got skinny legs even for a girl! Bet you can't climb as high as I can!"

The very thought of this rude character invading my blossomed sanctuary! "Oh, I probably could climb higher than you if I really wanted to, but this is my favorite limb."

"How do you know it's your favorite if you don't go higher?"

This had gone far enough without a proper introduction. How could I ask him to come play on the thinking limb if he didn't even know my name? "My name is Marianne — what's yours?" Truth was, everyone in the sixth grade knew Tom Benning, star of the basketball team and owner of a three-legged cocker spaniel. Tom wasn't a boy and he wasn't a teenager. But he seemed so much more mature than the rest of us. Rumor had it that he even smoked cigarettes.

"Marianne is a stupid name, and you must really be dumb to sit in a flower tree all morning!" he said, as he gave the branch a mighty shake. Next to me on the ground toppled the matted nest of hay and string, magnolia blossoms, and three cracked robin's eggs.

But my anger at the bird's nest incident subsided after awhile into a pleasant curiosity about Tom. From the back porch I could see into his garage, where he kept his bicycle, stilts, and Saturday war equipment—with a war hat that sprouted musty green plastic cabbage leaves on the top. Naturally, Tom was always elected General, and he shouted directions as the boys scattered through the neighborhood in search of the enemy. The enemy lived on Maple Street, and the good guys lived on Magnolia Lane. As a girl I was automatically disqualified from playing war. I'd sit on the porch and rock Baby Ruby, and pretend that Tom was my husband. After the war was over he would come home, thank me for my part in the war effort and for being such a good mother to Baby Ruby, and I would tell him that it was absolutely nothing, and that he was the best General in the whole world. To the shout of his commands I'd set three places for tea. The General never really came over for tea, because the war lasted until six-thirty on Saturday nights, and then his mother would call him for supper. But it was always fun to think that maybe he might come next week.

When the wars ceased forever, a '51 Ford cluttered up the Benning's yard. Now the General and his comrades had become a team of skilled mechanics. All I saw of Tom for a while were his legs protruding from under a green brightly polished heap of junk.

Mom and Mrs. Benning started borrowing things like sugar and cream of tartar. One day Mrs. Benning was whispering in our kitchen to Mom. (Why is it that mothers have all these things to whisper about when they know darn well that a whisper is just an open invitation for whoever can hear to listen?) I was sneaking some ice cream for dessert for breakfast and couldn't help hearing.

"What a lovely idea it would be if Tom and Marianne would go to the Junior High dance together! You know, our Tom is not a little boy any more, and I suppose if he's going to start dating, we should encourage him to ask the right kind of young lady."

Gulp! My heart skipped as I tapped the freezer to a close. But Tom was going steady with Judy the cheerleader. She was two years older than I was, and practically looked like a movie star. Guess his mom didn't know about her! I got the sort of queer feeling I'd had when my mother made me wear white anklet socks to school, or long underwear on gym days. I didn't dare to dream that he would ask me to the dance, but the dress that I thought of was pink

with little white rosebuds on the skirt. You know, the one that was on the cover of *Seventeen*. Mom and Mrs. Benning kept on with an awful lot of whispering. Some of it took place while I was at school, and I guess that's why I never knew why he didn't ask me.

Anyway, Tom sat next to me in Algebra. It's a wonder I ever made it through the last year of high school with *that* distraction! When Tom finally did ask me for a date it was to get some help with his math. I guess that you really couldn't call it a date, but to me it was close enough to inspire lots of daydreaming. It was on Thursday that he passed me the note: "Can I come over on Friday to see about this math?" All Friday morning I practiced in my mind the things we could talk about. I wondered if I should open the door, or if I should have Daddy sitting in the living room to call me. Daddy kind of suspected that I liked Tom, and he gladly volunteered to sit in the living room until he came. I made Daddy promise that he would look very nonchalant.

But the plate of chocolate-chip cookies and cool pitcher of milk were not to be tasted. After a few words with Dad, Tom simply picked up my notebook and walked to the door. "Thanks, kiddo! Give it to you Monday before class."

* * * * * * *

I love home weddings. Mom zipped up the long white gown that I had dreamed about for so long. Glancing out at the magnolia tree I saw a robin's nest tucked in among the blossoms. A speckled blue egg caught my eye in the early morning sun. Dum dum de dum down the stairs. Touch the banister in the familiar place where you broke it sliding. Don't trip over the butterflies in your stomach. Relatives smiling from the parlor. Fat ones on the couch, and skinny ones on the chairs brought by the caterers. Doesn't he look nervous! Wonder if the poor darling had any breakfast? And then there is Daddy! If he looks at me again like that I'm going to cry. Why should I cry? Isn't this the happiest day of my life?

Before we left we sat down to thank Mom and Dad, the way it says you should in the etiquette book. I guess they put that in there because people get so nervous and excited about their weddings that they just drive off and leave their parents standing there!

"I'm so *damn* sorry about that phone call in the middle of the ceremony!" said Daddy.

Had it rung? I never heard it! "Who was it, Daddy?" I asked. He glanced over at Mom as if she had just kicked him under the table.

"Just the Benning boy," said Daddy.

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